

U.S. ARMY

Journal

of Installation Management

Volume 2, Summer 2007

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2007		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Garrison Commanders: Leading at Several Levels				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership & Management, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 17013				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 5	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Garrison Commanders: Leading at Several Levels

By Colonel Charles D. Allen

Our Army continues to face the challenges of the 21st century posed by the strategic environment and the missions it must perform to protect the national interests of the United States. To achieve its vision of providing relevant and ready forces to combatant commanders, the Army has to simultaneously meet operational requirements and execute functional or institutional support as outlined in the United States Code Title 10.

Both the operational and functional Army requires competent leadership to fulfill its mission of preparing for, fighting, and winning our nation's wars. Most of the functional support of the Army occurs at installations where its Soldiers train, its Families live, and its civilian work force is employed.

Need for Leadership at Installations

The assignment of the installation commander is typically associated with the senior mission commander (SMC) on an Army post, who is also the commander of units that reside on the installation. Those commanders have multiple and competing responsibilities. If an SMC is commander of a division or operational headquarters, the focus is on ensuring the combat readiness of the units and the ability to deploy when called.

Similarly, the commander of a Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) activity has different concerns, such as providing trained Soldiers and educated leaders to operational units. In these and several other cases, the SMC – who also serves as the installation commander – has the responsibility to provide for the quality of life and well-being of those that rely on the facilities provided by the installation.



For most major installations, there are centrally-selected garrison commanders who are dually responsible to the SMC and the Installation Management Command (IMCOM). The garrison commander plays an integral role in facilitating the success of the SMC and other unit leaders on the installation. That role requires a unique blend of skills that crosses several levels of leadership.

While Army doctrine categorizes installation command at the organizational level, it is important that the garrison commander maintain direct-leadership skills and also execute strategic-leadership competencies. While garrisons may not be at the strategic level, their leadership has the responsibility to conduct strategic planning and management in order for the organizations to fulfill their purpose.

Importance of Mission

The purpose of any organization or institution should be clearly defined and communicated to its important constituents. That purpose gives the organizational raison d'être and helps to define what it is to accomplish and why. The organizational purpose is generally captured in a mission statement and, if appropriate, aligned with and supportive of a higher institutional mission. Specifically, the Army mission is to provide

Fort Carson Installation Mission Statement

Fort Carson's Mountain Post Team – best opportunity in the Army for Soldiers to train, leaders to lead, Families to grow and people to work. We are a first-rate power projection platform (air and rail) and Post Mobilization Maneuver Training Center; a premier installation and committed community partner, providing combat-ready forces for the 21st Century.

Vision Statement

Fort Carson trains, mobilizes, deploys, and sustains combat-ready forces. We ensure the well-being and protection of the Mountain Post Team, while operating a responsive, efficient and sustainable installation, Post Mobilization Maneuver Training Center and power projection platform.

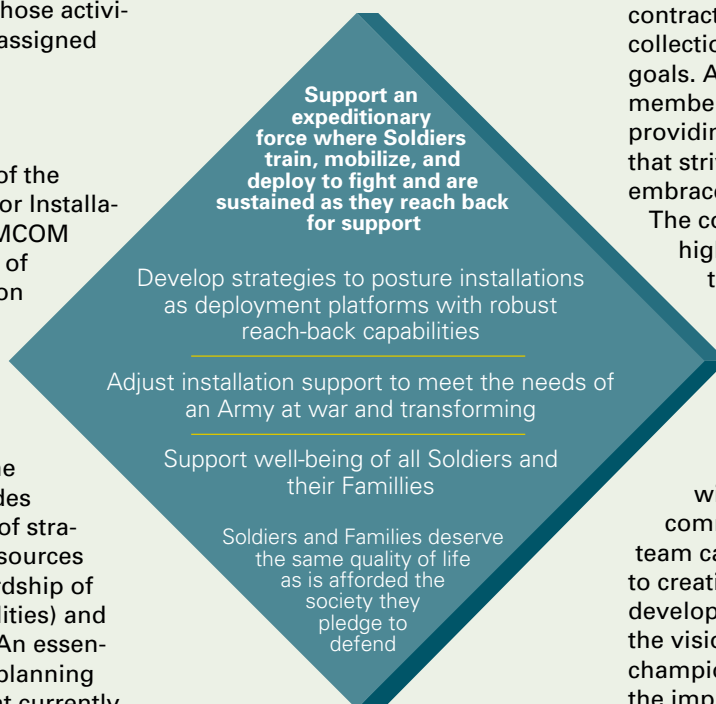
combatant commanders with the forces and capabilities necessary to execute the National Security, National Defense and National Military Strategies.¹ The implied and derived mission for Army garrisons must have as an essential task to provide adequate and timely base operations support (BOS) to units and organizations stationed on the installation in order for those activities to accomplish their assigned missions.

Establish Vision

The vision of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management and IMCOM is to make "Installations of Readiness." Each garrison commander should have a vision of what makes the installation relevant and valuable to its residents and other customers. The commander's role includes executing the functions of strategic management of resources (i.e., the effective stewardship of people, dollars, and facilities) and planning for the future. An essential part of the strategic planning process is to assess what currently it is against what it should be. In identifying the gaps, the leader establishes a desired end state, develops supporting goals and objectives, and specifies key tasks that should be accomplished to reach the end state.

A contemporary example is the assessment of Soldier requirements with the restationing of units of the Modular Force. In many cases, there is a shortfall in barracks, on-post housing, and child-care facilities that requires strategic planning for military construction integrated with the management of the installation. The process of visioning requires involvement of

key stakeholders who, once the vision is developed, can assist the organization's effort to make it a reality. For Army garrisons, a vision has to capture the essence of mission support to the tenant organizations, concern for the quality of life for its residents, and the well-being of its work force.



Installations of Readiness

Build the Team

The garrison commander's direct leadership skills are indispensable in building high-performing teams within the garrison structure and in building teams of stakeholders that benefit from the installation activities. The commander is given a formal structure with the standard garrison organization (SGO) that has been developed by ACSIM and IMCOM as the template for every installation. This structure is aligned with the common functions to be performed at each garrison and captured in the listing of 95 installation support services in the Common Levels of Support (CLS).

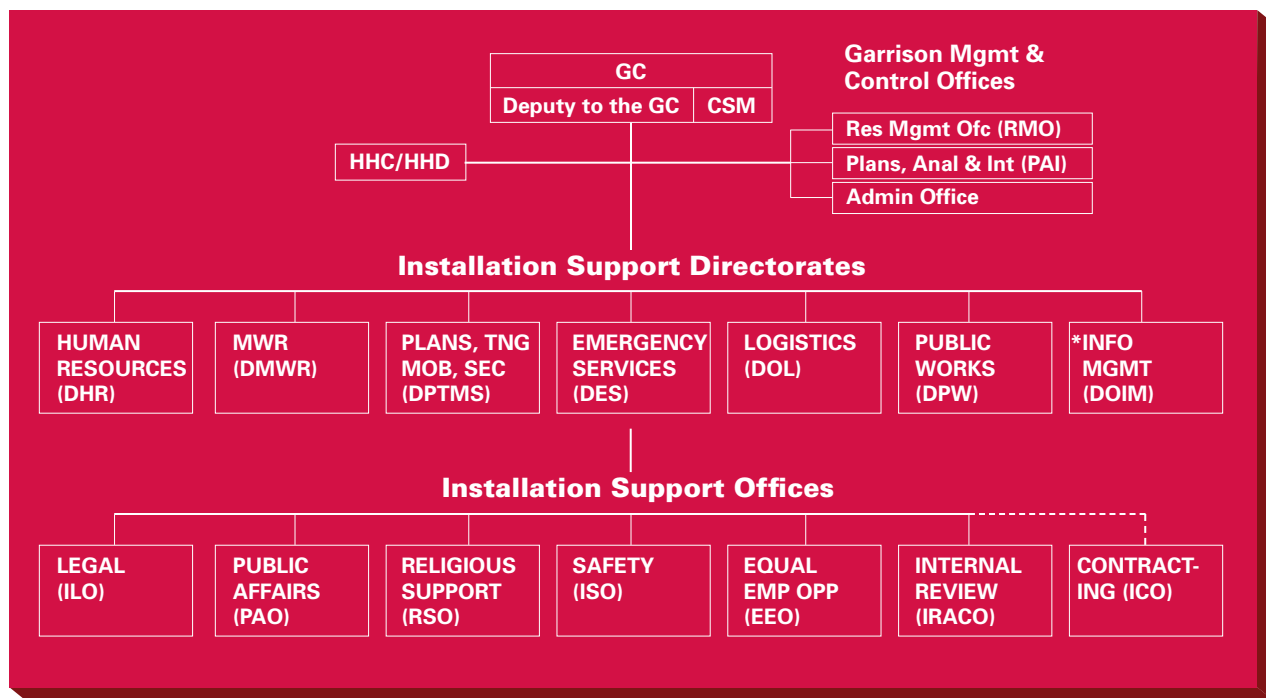
The SGO also provides the levels of management and supervision of the work force that delivers these essential services.

The garrison commander sets the tone and tenor of the organizational climate of the work force. The installation work force is diverse, consisting of uniformed service members, civilians, and contractors that must function as a collection of teams with common goals. A desirable climate has members that are committed to providing service to its customers, that strive for excellence, and that embrace a sense of community.

The commander's goal is to build high-performing installation teams dedicated and motivated to fulfill the organizational purpose.

The directors of the SGO form part of the executive leadership team of the garrison along with the commander and the command team. This leadership team can contribute significantly to creating an effective vision, developing strategies to achieve the vision, and then serve as the champions with the work force for the implementation of the strategy. As such, these team members play an integral part in meeting daily challenges, solving difficult problems, and are valuable participants in the strategic decision-making process for the installation. It is important that the commander recognizes the necessity of building the team of garrison leaders that adhere to common values, are committed to the organizational mission, and accept personal responsibility to contribute to success.





Standard Garrison Organization

*U.S. Army Manpower Analysis Agency (USAMAA) study ongoing for Standard Garrison DOIM

The garrison commander has a unique responsibility to gather and build teams from important constituents who are not in the garrison chain of command, but who can significantly contribute to its mission. These constituents include commanders and directors of other organizations that reside on the installation; local civic, community, and business leaders; and others that provide services to the installation. While the garrison commander may have little or no formal authority over them, these groups share common values and have vested interests in post activities. In many cases, they may be able to provide support and resources that would not otherwise be available.

My challenge has been the “strategic influence” portion of the job – trying to influence or shape organizational actions of people that have no direct C2 relationship with you – on or off post but will have direct impacts on the garrison mission. Some days I feel like I am more politician running for office than commander as you try to build and sustain coalitions.

– A Garrison Commander

The garrison vision may include being a good neighbor and member of the community with those outside the installation boundary. In this capacity, the garrison commander exercises strategic leadership in establishing a vision and building teams that cross organizational structures. The commander must have a “big

picture” perspective of the garrison as a system and understand how the interrelated components, both inside and outside of the traditional fence line, affect the ability to fulfill its purpose. The commander must see the whole of base support and extend it in time to ensure resources are committed to achieve future success. The commander must also understand and be aware of the competing interests and priorities of the multiple constituents.

It is commonplace for installations to have tenants that cross several domains. The concerns of a tactical unit for improvements on small arms firing ranges may compete with funds designated for road maintenance in the housing areas or for remediation of environmental hazards fields. Maintaining

the “Big Picture,” the garrison commander engages in master planning activities that apportion installation land as commercial, industrial, and residential for future capabilities.

At every opportunity, the commander should conduct strategic communications to ensure the installation stakeholders understand and embrace the vision. This serves to ensure that the installation executes its mission to meet the existing and near-term needs of its constituents. In addition, if the future end state is clearly understood and desirable, then long-term projects (e.g., unit moves, facility construction, land use redesignation, public-private partnerships in housing) can be couched in terms of benefits to stakeholders that exceed short-term costs. Recent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities will have negative effects on several installations, but working together with installation partners, those impacts may be mitigated and future benefits may be realized.

Execute the Strategy

Perhaps the most difficult task of the garrison commander is to execute the strategic plan. Strategic direction is provided by IMCOM and its regions. Senior leadership within the Army provides input through the Installation Management Board of Directors (IMBOD). Those decisions provide policy and resources to the subordinate garrison commanders. However, while higher headquarters may provide corporate direction, the “how” to execute is still in the purview of the garrison commander. That “how” is developed, recorded and communicated in the garrison strategy to achieve its end state. The commander must use the expertise and professional experience of the installation team to implement

the strategy. This will also require active monitoring, gathering feedback, and assessing performance in meeting objectives defined in the strategy. Garrison commanders conduct business process reviews with members of the staff, information-sharing meetings with tenants and external community leaders, and townhall meetings with residents to validate progress on performance measures.

Creativity and innovation is needed to confront and overcome obstacles that arise. The commander provides direction with the strategy, but must also continue to fire the motivation of the leaders and the work force. The commander must listen to the work force and other stakeholders when the strategy becomes difficult to implement. An important function is to challenge and validate the strategy so that it can be prudently modified, if appropriate.

Strategic impact at garrisons can be huge as GC's posture installations for the future. Bad choices will prevent or limit choices the Army will have in the future. For example, if a post has invested in sustainable concepts and kept open lines of communication with surrounding communities that overtime know that the post will act in good faith, then the army has strategic options that allow it to explore expansion.

– A Garrison Commander

Leadership Principles for Installation Management

The essentials of leadership at Army garrisons are appropriately captured in our doctrine. We define leadership as influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.² The garrison commander, through the process of visioning and develop-

ing strategy, provides purpose and direction to the work force. A healthy organizational climate, building and sustaining high-performing teams, and positive actions taken to implement the strategy are strong motivators to achieve mission and prepare the installation for the future.

The U.S. Army War College definition of strategic leadership includes the following key functions: provide vision, influence culture, establish policy and direction, allocate resources, and build teams and consensus. From this examination, it is clear that garrison commanders use direct-leader skills while providing organizational-level leadership. It is also obvious that they execute elements of strategic leadership with strategic effect for installations with the magnitude of resources required and longer time horizons. While not typical of other 21st century commands, the leadership of our Army installations requires officers that can function effectively at multiple levels – direct, organizational and strategic.

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